



# UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
United States Patent and Trademark Office  
Address: COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS  
P.O. Box 1450  
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450  
www.uspto.gov

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/822,443	04/12/2004	Jeffrey Duncan Watters	67602.000003	1433
21967 7590 03/18/2008 HUNTON & WILLIAMS LLP INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY DEPARTMENT 1900 K STREET, N.W. SUITE 1200 WASHINGTON, DC 20006-1109				
EXAMINER GOODEN JR, BARRY J				
ART UNIT		PAPER NUMBER		
3616				
MAIL DATE		DELIVERY MODE		
03/18/2008		PAPER		

**Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.**

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

### Office Action Summary

**Application No.**

10/822,443

**Applicant(s)**

WATTERS, JEFFREY DUNCAN

**Examiner**

BARRY J. GOODEN JR

**Art Unit**

3616

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --  
**Period for Reply**

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

**Status**

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 07 February 2008 (RCE filed).
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

**Disposition of Claims**

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 11-21 and 34-38 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 11-21 34-38 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

**Application Papers**

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on \_\_\_\_\_ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.  
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).  
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

**Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119**

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some \* c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
  2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. \_\_\_\_\_.
  3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

\* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

**Attachment(s)**

- 1) ☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/06)  
Paper No(s)/Mail Date \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)  
Paper No(s)/Mail Date \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application
- 6) ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**DETAILED ACTION**

This office action is in response to the RCE filed February 7, 2008. Currently, claims 11-21 and 34-38 are pending. Claims 11, 12, 14-18, and 34 are amended. Claims 1-10 and 22-33 are cancelled.

***Claim Objections***

1. Claim 11 is objected to because of the following informalities:

Claim 11 recites "allow improved". The term "improved" should be removed from the claims, as the claims should not be directed to the purported merits of the invention.

Appropriate correction is required.

***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103***

1. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

2. Claims 11-18 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over the Nissan Serena in view of Anderson et al., US Patent 4,847,972.

In regards to claims 11-18, the Nissan Serena is disclosed as a vehicle comprising an independent rear suspension (multi-link), mountings thereof, and a rear hatch door capable of accommodating a wheelchair in a width direction.

In regards to Anderson et al., an apparatus is disclosed wherein a portion of the floorpan of a vehicle is lowered to facilitate ingress and egress of a handicapped person wherein the floorpan extends forwardly from a rearward entrance of the vehicle to a driver position;

wherein the lowered portion of the floorpan is sufficiently wide to accommodate a handicapped person; and,

wherein the floorpan is substantially flat (Reference is made to Figures 5-15).

It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the Nissan Serena in view of the teachings of Anderson et al. to include a lowered floorpan extending from a rearward entrance to a driver portion of the vehicle so as to facilitate ingress and egress of a handicapped occupant in a vehicle other than that disclosed in Anderson et al., since it is old and well known to provide means of occupant ingress and egress for handicapped persons in various vehicles.

Furthermore, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the location at which a handicapped person may enter the vehicle, thus modifying the layout of the floorpan and location of the lowered portions, since it has been held that rearranging parts of an invention involves only routine skill in the art.

Also, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to provide a floorpan of various widths, including 850mm (less than a third of the Serena's width), since it has been held that where the general conditions of a claim are disclosed in the prior art, discovering the optimum or workable ranges involves only routine skill in the art.

3. Claims 19-21 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over the Nissan Serena in view of Anderson et al., US Patent 4,847,972, and further in view of Hall, US Patent 4,688,843.

In regards to Hall, a wheelchair restraint system including a restraining belt (37) being anchored to the vehicle floor (12) by means of a belt mounting frame (37A) (Reference is made to Figures 1-5).

It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the floorpan of the Nissan Serena in view of the teachings of Anderson et al., as disclosed above, in view of the teachings of Hall to include a wheelchair restraint system so as to enable a handicapped person to operate the vehicle without worry of moving within the vehicle.

4. Claims 34-38 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over the Nissan Serena in view of Anderson et al., US Patent 4,847,972, and further in view of Alatalo, US Patent 5,641,176.

In regards to claims 34-38, the combination as disclosed above the claimed elements excluding a rear trailing arm suspension.

Alatalo discloses all of the claimed elements including a trailing arm (10), a front mount (40), a spring mount (34), a wheel mount (18), and a shock mount (22). Alatalo discloses bushings rather than bearings; however it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to include a bearing since it is a simple substitution of one known element for another to obtain predictable results.

Furthermore, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the suspension of the Nissan Serena in view of Anderson et al. in view of the teachings of Alatalo to include a rear trailing arm suspension since it is a simple substitution of one known element for another to obtain predictable results.

#### ***Response to Arguments***

5. Applicant's arguments filed February 7, 2008 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive. Examiner maintains the previous rejection is proper.

In a response to election/restriction filed August 28, 2006, the applicant elected claims 11-21, which were drawn to a front wheel drive vehicle. In doing so the applicant elected product-by-process claims (Reference is made to MPEP 2113), the determination of patentability of product-by-process claims is based on the product itself and does not depend on its method of production. As such, the additional components (for example "original rear suspension") do not serve to define over the prior art, as they are not germane to the patentability of the product itself.

Examiner maintains the previous rejection is proper. Further, the examiner maintains that the "original rear suspension" does not serve to define over the prior art as the final product only contains elements drawn to the "substitute rear suspension", all of these elements are disclosed by the Nissan Serena as detailed above. Furthermore, the examiner provided an NPL document that clearly documents that the information on the Nissan Serena was publicly available at least as of October 1999.

Art Unit: 3611

***Conclusion***

6. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to BARRY J. GOODEN JR whose telephone number is (571)272-5135. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Friday 8:00am-4:30pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Lesley Morris can be reached on (571) 272-6651. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

Barry J Gooden Jr.  
Examiner  
Art Unit 3616

BJG

/Lesley D. Morris/  
Supervisory Patent Examiner, Art Unit 3611